Office for Children and Youth

Annual Report

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Office for Children and Youth

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Office for Children and Youth

September 4, 2003

Honourable Geoff Plant
Attorney General of British Columbia
and Minister Responsible for Treaty Negotiations
Government of British Columbia
Room 234
Parliament Buildings
Victoria, British Columbia
V8V 1X4

Dear Mr. Attorney:

Re: Annual Report of the Child and Youth Officer, Province of British Columbia

The attached Report is sent to you pursuant to Section 8 (1 and 2) of the *Office for Children and Youth Act* in order that it may be provided by you to the Legislative Assembly as required by the statute. The Report covers the period from September 30, 2002 to March 31, 2003.

During this period Paul Pallan was the Acting Child and Youth Officer for the Province. I want to take this opportunity to publicly thank him for his dedicated service to the children and youth of British Columbia. Although I am required by the statute to submit the Report to you, it is entirely concerned with the work of the office during Mr. Pallan's tenure as the Acting Officer. As this was a transition period, the report focuses on the start-up of the Office, and on the transferral provisions of the *Office for Children and Youth Act*. I look forward to providing a Report next year when the material in the Report will arise from the work of the office during my tenure as the Officer from May 1, 2003.

I trust that you and the other Members of the Legislative Assembly and the public will find the Report informative.

Yours very truly,

Jane Morley, Q.C.
Child and Youth Officer
Province of British Columbia

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Background

As part of government's core review process, agencies involved in providing oversight and review of children's services were reviewed, and the results of this review were published in the "Report on the Core Services Review of the Children's Commission and Overlapping Services Provided by the Child, Youth and Family Advocate, the Ombudsman, the Coroner, and Ministry of Child and Family Development" in December, 2001.

In February 2002, Cabinet approved the establishment of a new Office for Children and Youth, and the concomitant elimination of the Children's Commission and the Office of the Child, Youth and Family Advocate, as recommended in the core review report.

The mandate for the new office was provided in the *Office for Children and Youth Act*, passed by the legislature in May 2002, and proclaimed on September 30, 2002.

Effective that date, Paul Pallan was named Acting Child and Youth Officer by Attorney General Geoff Plant. Effective May 1, 2003, Jane Morley, Q.C. was appointed Child and Youth Officer by the Lieutenant Governor in Council.

Mandate of the Child and Youth Officer

The legislated mandate of the Child and Youth Officer is outlined in the *Office for Children and Youth Act*, as follows:

3 (1) The functions of the child and youth officer are to provide support to children, youth and their families in obtaining relevant services and to provide independent observations and advice to government about the state of services provided or funded by government to children and youth in British Columbia, including but not limited to the following:

(a) services provided under the *Adoption Act* and the *Child, Family and Community Service Act*;

(b) early childhood development and care services;

(c) mental health services for children and youth;

(d) addiction services for children and youth;

(e) youth justice services;

(f) services for youth and young adults during transition to adulthood.

(2) For the purposes of subsection (1), the child and youth officer may do the following:

(a) provide information and advice to children, youth and their families about how to effectively access services that meet their needs;

(b) provide information and advice to children, youth and their families about how to become effective self advocates with respect to the rights of children and youth in care under the *Child, Family and Community Service Act*;

(c) in extraordinary circumstances, advocate on behalf of individual children and youth to ensure that their views are heard and considered;

(d) promote and coordinate in communities the establishment of advocacy services for children, youth and their families;

(e) monitor the delivery of services in relation to the requirements of the *Child, Family and Community Service Act* and in particular the requirements of sections 2 and 3 of that Act;

(f) monitor the delivery of services referred to in subsection (1) in relation to relevant service delivery standards;

(g) provide advice to government and communities about the effectiveness, responsiveness and relevance of services for children, youth and their families;

The Child and Youth Officer holds a statutory independent office, and is appointed for a fixed term by the Lieutenant Governor-in-Council. The Officer has statutory authority to make special reports to the public, and authority to comment publicly on matters affecting children and youth. The Officer's Annual Report is a public document that is submitted to the Legislative Assembly by the Attorney General.

The Child and Youth Officer is financially accountable through the Attorney General, and otherwise reports formally to the Attorney General only in the special case of investigations requested by the Attorney General as provided for in the Act.

Start Up and Transition Activities September 2002 to March 2003

The *Office for Children and Youth Act* provides in Section 15 a number of transition provisions relating to the wind-up of the work of the Children's Commission and the Office of the Child, Youth and Family Advocate.

Accepted complaints under the Children's Commission Act were continued as reviews before the tribunal division, with a senior employee designated by the Child and Youth Officer as a single member panel. At March 31, 2003, four such cases remained before the tribunal division. All uncompleted fatality investigations were suspended as the Coroner's Office assumed sole responsibility for activities relating to the review of children's deaths.

Open individual advocacy matters under the *Child, Youth and Family Advocacy Act* were continued by the Acting Child and Youth Officer.

Transfer of records under both of the repealed Acts occurred according to the legislative provisions.

Other major transition activities included developing a budget plan within the resources allocated to the new Office, developing a staffing plan to meet the new mandate, completing an organizational design amalgamating the previous offices and establishing locations in Victoria and Vancouver, and undertaking workforce adjustment strategies to reduce staffing to required levels.

In the six-month period ending March 31, 2003, the Acting Child and Youth Officer and his staff carried out the following activities:

- Handled 589 advocacy enquiry calls:
    - — 62% of these calls were from family members, and 16% were from children and youth;
    - — 70% of these calls related to Ministry of Children and Family Development issues, 29% related to the Ministry of Attorney General issues, and the remainder related to a variety of other government service issues.
- Undertook a partnership with Save the Children Canada to implement the Right Way Program in British Columbia, which involves supporting two youth coordinators to train other youth in advocacy.
- Completed and published two reports based on analysis of the child fatalities database developed by the former Children's Commission: Educational Attainment of Children in Care; and, Violence and Maltreatment in the Histories of Children and Youth who Died from Homicide and Suicide in British Columbia.

- Undertook strategic and operational planning to support the activities mandated by the new legislation.
- Introduced the new mandate to community stakeholders, service providers, and government organizations.
- Developed data collection frameworks to meet the new mandate.
- Developed draft protocols and memoranda of understanding with government partners.
- Undertook planning of specific projects of relevance to the mandate of the Officer.

Appendix A

Office for Children and Youth
2002/2003 Expenditures
(for the period September 30, 2002 to March 31, 2003) *

Description	Amount ($)	Percentage (%)
Salaries and benefits (21 employees)	820,000	66
Employee travel	41,000	3
Professional services contracts (expert advice, youth liaison, etc.)	128,000	10
Information systems	72,250	6
General office and business expenses	81,250	7
Building occupancy	78,600	6
Right Way Project	20,500	2
Total Expenditures **	**1,241,600**	**100**

Notes:

* Proclamation of new Office for Children and Youth occurred September 30, 2003.

** Figures are rounded to the nearest whole number.

Appendix B

Office for Children and Youth Employees
(October 2002 to March 2003)

Lynell Anderson
Rosalyn Baker
Kathy Berggren-Clive
Lorraine Calderwood-Parsons
Wilma Clarke
Anne Colwell
Janet Donald
Michael Egilson
Wendy Ferguson
Dulcie Fernandes
Kirsten Ingram
Judith Kerr
John Greschner
Jeannie MacPherson
Ian Mass
Heather Meadows
Wayne Mitic
Paul Pallan
Christine Peterson
Hendrik Roelants
Anne Savard

How to Contact Us

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